

SAMSON AGONISTES.

A

DRAMATIC POEM.

WRITTEN ON THE MODEL OF

THE ANCIENT GREEK TRAGEDY.

BY JOHN MILTON.



LONDON:

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THE LIFE OF JOHN MILTON.

FROM a family and town of his name in Oxfordshire our author derived his descent; but he was born at London in the year 1608. His father, John Milton, by profession a Scrivener, lived in a reputable manner on a competent estate, entirely his own acquisition; having been early disinherited by his parents for renouncing the communion of the Church of Rome, to which they were zealously devoted. By his wife Sarah Caston he had likewise one daughter, named Anna; and another son, Christopher, whom he trained to the practice of the Common Law, and who attained to the dignity of Judge of the Common Pleas; of which he died divested not long after the Revolution.

But John, the subject of the present essay, was the favourite of his father's hopes; who, to cultivate the great genius which early displayed itself, was at the expence of a domestic tutor. At his initiation (when twelve years of age) he is said to have applied himself to letters with such indefatigable industry, that he rarely was prevailed with to quit his studies before midnight. From a domestic education he was removed to St. Paul's School, to complete his acquaintance with the classics; and after a short stay there, (at the age of fifteen) was transplanted to Christ-College in Cambridge, where he distinguished himself in all kinds of academical exercises. Of this society he continued a member till he commenced Master of Arts, and then retired to his father's seat at Horton in Buckinghamshire (at the age of twenty-three); where he pursued his studies with unparalleled assiduity and success, for some years.

His mother dying, he prevailed with his father to gratify an inclination he had long entertained of seeing foreign countries

(then aged thirty.) Having employed his curiosity about two years in France and Italy, on the news of a civil war breaking out in England, he returned, without taking a survey of Greece and Sicily, as at his setting out the scheme was projected. At Paris the Lord Viscount Scudamore, ambassador from King Charles I. introduced him to the acquaintance of Grotius; who at that time was honoured with the same character there by Christina Queen of Sweden. In Rome, Genoa, Florence, and other cities of Italy, he contracted a familiarity with those who were of the highest reputation for wit and learning: several of whom gave him very obliging testimonies of their friendship and esteem, which are printed before his Latin poems.

Returning from his travels (at the age of thirty-two) he found England on the point of being involved in blood and confusion. He resided in the city; where he undertook the education of his sister's sons, and some other young gentlemen.

In this philosophical course he continued without a wife to the year 1643 (aged thirty-five); when he married Mary the daughter of Richard Powel of Forest-hill in Oxfordshire: a gentleman of estate and reputation in that county; and of principles so very opposite to his son-in-law, that the marriage is more to be wondered, than the separation which ensued, in little more than a month after she had cohabited with him in London. Soon after, in a visit at one of his relations, he found his wife prostrate before him, imploring forgiveness and reconciliation. It is not to be doubted but an interview of that nature, so little expected, must wonderfully affect him; and perhaps the impressions it made on his imagination contributed much to the painting of that pathetic scene in *Paradise Lost*, in which Eve addresseth herself to Adam for pardon and peace. At the intercession of his friends who were present, after a short reluctance, he generously sacrificed all his resentment to her tears: and after this re-union, so far was he from retaining an unkind memory

of the provocations which he had received from her ill conduct, that when the King's cause was entirely oppressed, and her father, who had been active in his loyalty, was exposed to sequestration, Milton received both him and his family to protection and free entertainment in his own house till their affairs were accommodated by his interest in the victorious party.

For (at the age of forty-one) he was now grown famous by his polemical writings of various kinds, and held in great favour and esteem by those who had power to dispose of all preferments in the state. Although the spoils of his country lay at his feet, neither his conscience nor his honour could stoop to gather them: for it is affirmed, that he lived always in a frugal retirement, and before his death had disposed of his library, which we may suppose to have been a valuable collection: he left no more than fifteen hundred pounds behind him for the support of his family.

In the forty-second year of his age a commission to constitute him Adjutant-General to Sir William Waller was promised; but soon superseded by Waller's being laid aside. However, the keenness of his pen had so effectually recommended him to Cromwell's esteem, that when he took the reins of government into his own hand, he advanced him to be Latin Secretary, both to himself and the Parliament: the former of these preferments he enjoyed both under Cromwell and his son; the other till King Charles II. was restored. Not long after his wife died in childbed: and much about the time of her death, a gutta serena, which had for several years been gradually increasing, totally extinguished his sight. In this melancholic condition he was easily prevailed with to think of taking another wife; who was Catherine the daughter of Captain Woodcock of Hackney; and she too, in less than a year after their marriage, died in the same unfortunate manner as the former had done; and in his twenty-third sonnet he does honour to her memory.

When fifty-two years old, he married Elizabeth the daughter of Mr. Minshul, a Cheshire gentleman, by whom he had no issue. Three daughters by his first wife were then living; the two elder of whom are said to have been very serviceable to him in his studies. For, having been instructed to pronounce not only the modern, but also the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages, they read in their respective originals whatever authors he wanted to consult; though they understood none but their mother-tongue.

We come now to take a survey of him in that point of view, in which he will be looked on by all succeeding ages with equal delight and admiration. An interval of above twenty years had elapsed since he wrote the *Mask of * Comus*, *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, and *† Lycidas*; all in such an exquisite strain, that though he had left no other monuments of his genius behind him, his name had been immortal. But, neither the infirmities of age and constitution, nor the vicissitudes of fortune, could depress the vigour of his mind, or divert it from executing a design he had long conceived of writing an Heroic Poem.

In the year 1669 (and sixty-first year of his age) he published his *Paradise Lost*, the noblest poem, perhaps, that ever the wit of man produced.

And now perhaps it may pass for fiction, what with great veracity we affirm to be a fact, that Milton, after having with much difficulty prevailed to have this divine Poem licensed for the press, could sell the copy for no more than fifteen pounds: the payment of which valuable consideration depended on the sale of three numerous impressions. So unreasonably may personal prejudice affect the most excellent performances! About two years after, (at the age of sixty-three) together with *Samson Agonistes*, he published *Paradise Regained*.

* Aged 26.

† Aged 29.

And thus having attended him to the sixty-sixth year of his age, as closely as such imperfect lights as men of letters and retirement usually leave to guide our inquiry would allow; it now only remains to be recorded, that in the year 1674, (at the age of 66-7) the gout put a period to his life, at Bunhill, near London; from whence his body was conveyed to St. Giles's church by Cripplegate, where it lies interred in the Chancel: but neither has, nor wants, a monument to perpetuate his memory.

In his youth he is said to have been extremely handsome: the colour of his hair was a light-brown; the symmetry of his features exact; enlivened with an agreeable air, and a beautiful mixture of fair and ruddy: which occasioned the Marquis of Villa to give his epigram the same turn of thought, which Gregory Arch-Deacon of Rome had employed above a thousand years before in praising the amiable complexions of some English youths, before their conversion to Christianity. His stature did not exceed the middle-size; neither too lean, nor corpulent: his limbs well proportioned, nervous, and active; serviceable in all respects to his exercising the sword, in which he much delighted. In his diet he was abstemious; and strong liquors of all kinds were his aversion. In his latter years he went to bed at nine and got up at five o'clock in the morning. When blindness restrained him from other exercises, he had a machine to swing in, for the preservation of his health; and diverted himself in his chamber with playing on an organ. His deportment was erect, open, affable; his conversation easy, cheerful, instructive; his wit on all occasions at command, facetious, grave, or satirical, as the subject required. His judgement was just and penetrating; his apprehension, quick; his memory, tenacious of what he read; his reading, only not so extensive as his genius, for that was universal. And having treasured up such immense stores of science, perhaps the faculties of his soul grew more vigorous after he was deprived of his sight: and his imagination

(naturally sublime, and enlarged by reading Romances, of which he was much enamoured in his youth) when it was wholly abstracted from material objects, was more at liberty to make such amazing excursions into the ideal world, when in composing his divine work he was tempted to range

Beyond the visible diurnal sphere.

It is reported, (and there is a passage in one of his Latin Elegies to countenance the tradition) that his fancy made the happiest flights in the spring: but one of his nephews used to deliver it as Milton's own observation, that his invention was in its highest perfection from September to the Vernal Equinox.

CHARACTER OF SAMSON AGONISTES.

THIS piece is written in imitation of the Greek tragic poets, more particularly Æschylus.

The measure is not regular, being composed of every kind indiscriminately blended together. The speaking scenes are relieved and explained by *Choruses*, and all the regular constraint of division into acts and scenes is totally avoided, the poem having never been intended by the author for the stage, who strongly laboured to render it admirable for the closet. So noble, so just, so elegant, so poetical is the diction of it, that the great Mr. Dryden, whose imagination might be supposed to be equal to that of any man, has transferred many thoughts of this piece into his tragedy of *Aureng-zebe*.

Bishop Atterbury once pressed Mr. Pope to polish and adapt this piece. 'If,' says he, 'upon a new perusal of it, you think as I do, that it is written in the very spirit of the ancients, it deserves your care, and is capable of being improved, with little trouble, into a perfect model and standard of tragic poetry.'

A Mr. Dixon, of Dublin, in 1741, is said to have at length adapted it for the stage; but, owing to a dispute among the proprietors of the theatre, it was never performed. He introduced so great a number of characters, that every performer of consequence in the theatre, whether actor, singer, or dancer, had a part allotted to him for the illustration of the piece.

THE ARGUMENT.

SAMSON made captive, blind, and now in the prison at Gaza, there to labour as in a common workhouse, on a festival day, in the general cessation from labour, comes forth into the open air, to a place nigh, somewhat retir'd, there to sit awhile and bemoan his condition: where he happens at length to be visited by certain friends and equals of his Tribe, which make the Chorus, who seek to comfort him what they can; then by his old father Manoah, who endeavours the like, and withal tells him his purpose to procure his liberty by ransom; lastly, that this feast was proclaim'd by the Philistines as a day of thanksgiving for their deliverance from the hands of Samson, which yet more troubles him. Manoah then departs to prosecute his endeavour with the Philistine lords for Samson's redemption; who in the mean while is visited by other persons; and lastly by a public officer to require his coming to the feast before the lords and people, to play or shew his strength in their presence; he at first refuses, dismissing the public officer with absolute denial to come; at length persuaded inwardly that this was from God, he yields to go along with him, who came now the second time with great threatnings to fetch him: the Chorus yet remaining on the place. Manoah returns, full of joyful hope, to procure ere long his son's deliverance, in the midst of which discourse an Hebrew comes in haste, confusedly at first, and afterwards more distinctly relating the catastrophe, what Samson had done to the Philistines, and by accident to himself; wherewith the tragedy ends.

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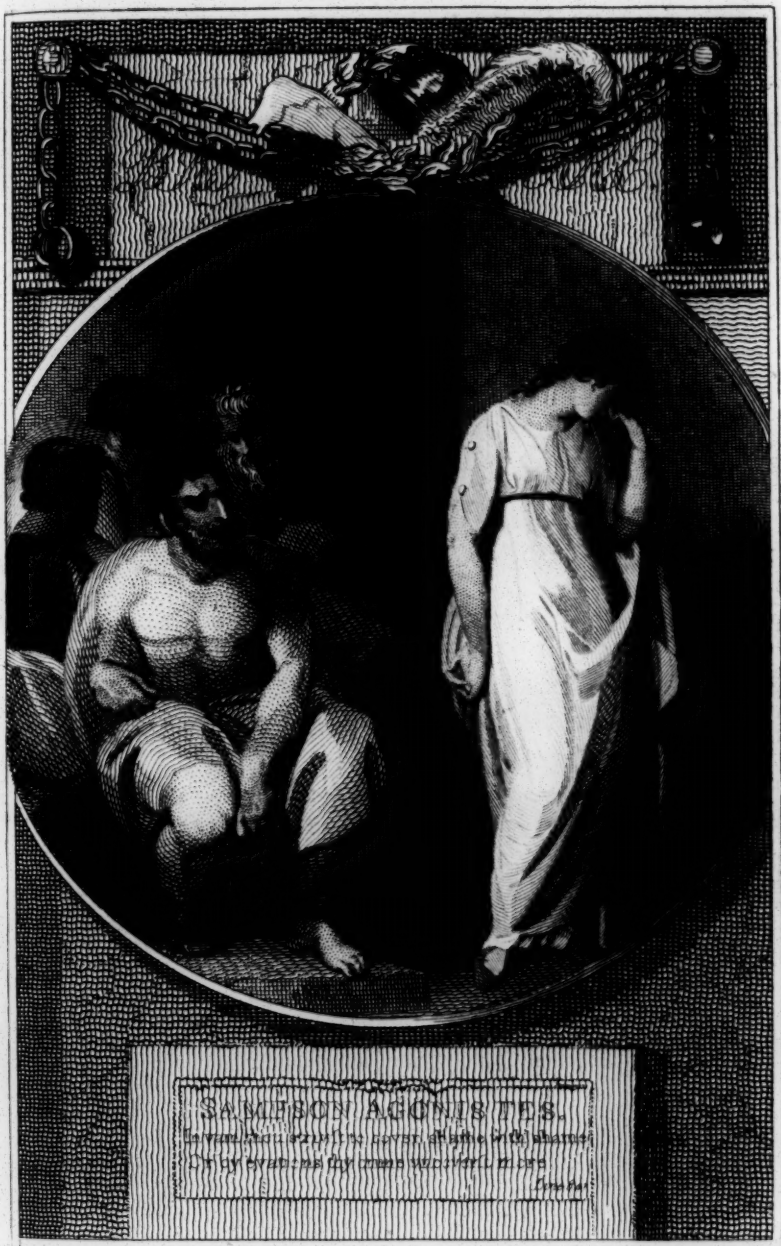


Samson Agonistes.

Tragedy from the Book of Judges. In two Acts.

By the Author of the Plays to find some more.

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SAMSON AGONISTES.

Samson.

A LITTLE onward lend thy guiding hand
To these dark steps, a little further on ;
For yonder bank hath choice of sun or shade :
There I am wont to sit, when any chance
Relieves me from my task of servile toil,
Daily' in the common prison else enjoin'd me,
Where I a prisoner chain'd, scarce freely draw
The air imprison'd also, close and damp,
Unwholesome draught : but here I feel amends,
The breath of heav'n, fresh blowing, pure and sweet,
With day-spring born ; here leave me to respire.
This day a solemn feast the people hold
To Dagon, their sea-idol, and forbid
Laborious works ; unwillingly this rest
Their superstition yields me ; hence with leave
Retiring from the popular noise, I seek
This unfrequented place to find some ease,
Ease to the body some, none to the mind
From restless thoughts, that like a deadly swarm
Of hornets arm'd, no sooner found alone,
But rush upon me thronging, and present
Times past, what once I was, and what am now.
Oh wherefore was my birth from Heav'n foretold

Twice by an angel, who at last in sight
Of both my parents, all in flames ascended
From off the altar, where an offering burn'd,
As in a fiery column charioting
His god-like presence, and from some great act
Or benefit reveal'd to Abraham's race?
Why was my breeding order'd and prescrib'd
As of a person separate to God,
Design'd for great exploits; if I must die
Betray'd, captiv'd, and both my eyes put out,
Made of my enemies the scorn and gaze;
To grind in brazen fetters under task
With this heav'n-gifted strength? O glorious strength,
Put to the labour of a beast; debas'd
Lower than bond-slave! Promise was that I
Should Israel from Philistian yoke deliver;
Ask for this great deliverer now, and find him
Eyeless in Gaza at the mill with slaves,
Himself in bonds under Philistian yoke:
Yet stay, let me not rashly call in doubt
Divine prediction; what if all foretold
Had been fulfill'd but through mine own default,
Whom have I to complain of but myself?
Who this high gift of strength committed to me,
In what part lodg'd, how easily bereft me,
Under the seal of silence could not keep,
But weakly to a woman must reveal it,
O'ercome with importunity and tears.
O impotence of mind, in body strong!
But what is strength without a double share
Of wisdom, vast, unweildy, burthensome,
Proudly secure, yet liable to fall
By weakest subtleties, not made to rule,

But to subserve where wisdom bears command !
God, when he gave me strength, to show withal
How slight the gift was, hung it in my hair.
But peace, I must not quarrel with the will
Of highest dispensation, which herein
Haply had ends above my reach to know :
Suffices that to me strength is my bane,
And proves the source of all my miseries ;
So many and so huge, that each apart
Would ask a life to wail : but chief of all,
Oh loss of sight, of thee I most complain !
Blind among enemies, O worse than chains,
Dungeon, or beggary, or decrepit age !
Light, the prime work of God, to me' is extinct,
And all her various objects of delight
Annul'd, which might in part my grief have eas'd,
Inferior to the vilest now become
Of man or worm ; the vilest here excel me,
They creep, yet see ; I dark in light expos'd
To daily fraud, contempt, abuse, and wrong,
Within doors, or without, still as a fool,
In power of others, never in my own ;
Scarce half I seem to live, dead more than half.
O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon,
Irrecoverably dark, total eclipse
Without all hope of day !
O first created beam, and thou great word,
Let there be light, and light was over all ;
Why am I thus bereav'd thy prime decree ?
The sun to me is dark
And silent as the moon,
When she deserts the night,
Hid in her vacant interlunar cave.

Since light so necessary is to life,
And almost life itself, if it be true
That light is in the soul,
She all in every part; why was the sight
To such a tender ball as th' eye confin'd,
So obvious and so easy to be quench'd?
And not as feeling through all parts diffus'd,
That she might look at will through every pore?
Then had I not been thus exil'd from light,
As in the land of darkness yet in light,
To live a life half dead, a living death,
And bury'd: but O yet more miserable!
Myself my sepulchre, a moving grave,
Bury'd, yet not exempt
By privilege of death and burial
From worst of other evils, pains, and wrongs,
But made hereby obnoxious more
To all the miseries of life,
Life in captivity
Among inhuman foes.
But who are these? for with joint pace I hear
The tread of many feet steering this way;
Perhaps my enemies, who come to stare
At my affliction, and perhaps to insult,
Their daily practice to afflict me more.

Chor. This, this is he; softly a while,
Let us not break in upon him;
O change beyond report, thought or belief!
See how he lies at random, carelessly diffus'd,
With languish'd head unpropt,
As one past hope, abandon'd,
And by himself given over;
In slavish habit, ill fitted weeds

O'er-worn and soil'd ;
Or do my eyes misrepresent? Can this be he,
That heroic, that renown'd,
Irresistible Samson? whom, unarm'd,
No strength of man, or fiercest wild beast could withstand ;
Who tore the lion, as the lion tears the kid,
Ran on imbattel'd armies clad in iron,
And weaponless himself,
Made arms ridiculous, useless the forgery
Of brazen shield and spear, the hammer'd cuirass,
Chalybean temper'd steel, and frock of mail
Adamantean proof ;
But safest he who stood aloof,
When insupportably his foot advanc'd,
In scorn of their proud arms and warlike tools,
Spurn'd them to death by troops. The bold Ascalonite
Fled from his lion ramp, old warriors turn'd
Their plated backs under his heel ;
Or grov'ling soil'd their crested helmets in the dust.
Then with what trivial weapon came to hand,
The jaw of a dead ass, his sword of bone,
A thousand fore-skins fell, the flower of Palestine,
In Ramath-lechi famous to this day.
Then by main force pull'd up, and on his shoulders bore
The gates of Azza, post, and massy bar,
Up to the hill by Hebron, seat of giants old,
No journey of a sabbath-day, and loaded so ;
Like whom the Gentiles feign to bear up Heav'n.
Which shall I first bewail,
Thy bondage or lost sight,
Prison within prison
Inseparably dark ?
Thou art become (O worst imprisonment !)

'The dungeon of thyself; thy soul
 (Which men enjoying sight oft without cause complain)
 Imprison'd now indeed,
 In real darknes of the body dwells,
 Shut up from outward light
 To incorporate with gloomy night;
 For inward light, alas!
 Puts forth no visual beam.
 O mirror of our fickle state,
 Since man on earth unparallel'd!
 'The rarer thy example stands,
 By how much from the top of wond'rous glory,
 Strongest of mortal men,
 To lowest pitch of abject fortune thou art fall'n,
 For him I reckon not in high estate
 Whom long descent of birth
 Or the sphere of fortune raises;
 But thee whose strength, while virtue was her mate,
 Might have subdued the earth,
 Universally crown'd with highest praises.

Sam. I hear the sound of words, their sense the air
 Dissolves unjointed ere it reach my ear.

Chor. He speaks, let us draw nigh. Matchless in might,
 The glory late of Israel, now the grief;
 We come thy friends and neighbours not unknown
 From Eshtaol and Zora's fruitful vale,
 To visit or bewail thee, or if better,
 Counsel or consolation we may bring,
 Salve to thy sores; apt words have power to swage
 The tumours of a troubled mind,
 And are as balm to fester'd wounds.

Sam. Your coming, friends, revives me, for I learn
 Now of my own experience, not by talk,

How counterfeit a coin they are who friends
Bear in their superscription, (of the most
I would be understood) in prosp'rous days
They swarm, but in adverse withdraw their head,
Not to be found, though sought. Ye see, O friends,
How many evils have inclos'd me round :
Yet that which was the worst now least afflicts me,
Blindness—for had I sight, confus'd with shame,
How could I once look up, or heave the head,
Who like a foolish pilot have shipwreck'd
My vessel trusted to me from above,
Gloriously rigg'd; and for a word, a tear,
Fool, have divulged the secret gift of God
To a deceitful woman? Tell me, friends,
Am I not sung and proverb'd for a fool
In every street? do they not say, how well
Are come upon him his deserts? yet why?
Immeasurable strength they might behold
In me, of wisdom nothing more than mean;
This with the other should, at least, have pair'd,
These two proportion'd ill drove me transverse.

Chor. 'Tax not divine disposal; wisest men
Have err'd, and by bad women been deceiv'd;
And shall again, pretend they ne'er so wise.
Deject not then so overmuch thyself,
Who hast of sorrow thy full load besides;
Yet truth to say, I oft have heard men wonder
Why thou shouldst wed Philistian women rather
Than of thy own tribe fairer, or as fair,
At least of thy own nation, and as noble.

Sam. The first I saw at Timna, and she pleas'd
Me, not my parents, that I sought to wed
The daughter of an infidel: they knew not

That what I motion'd was of God; I knew
from intimate impulse, and therefore urg'd
The marriage on; that by occasion hence
I might begin Israel's deliverance,
The work to which I was divinely call'd.
She proving false, the next I took to wife
(O that I never had! fond wish too late)
Was in the vale of Sorec, Dalila,
That specious monster, my accomplish'd snare.
I thought it lawful from my former act,
And the same end; still watching to oppress
Israel's oppressors: of what now I suffer
She was not the prime cause, but I myself,
Who vanquish'd with a peal of words (O weakness!)
Gave up my fort of silence to a woman.

Chor. In seeking just occasion to provoke
The Philistine, thy country's enemy,
Thou never wast remiss, I bear thee witness:
Yet Israel still serves with all his sons.

Sam. That fault I take not on me, but transfer
On Israel's governors, and heads of tribes,
Who seeing those great acts, which God had done
Singly by me against their conquerors,
Acknowledg'd not, or not all consider'd
Deliverance offer'd: I on the other side
Us'd no ambition to commend my deeds,
The deeds themselves, though mute, spoke loud the doer:
But they persisted deaf, and would not seem
To count them things worth notice, till at length
Their lords the Philistines, with gather'd powers
Enter'd Judea seeking me, who then
Safe to the rock of Etham was retir'd,
Not flying, but fore-casting in what place

To set upon them, what advantag'd best :
Mean while the men of Judah, to prevent
The harass of their land, beset me round ;
I willingly on some conditions came
Into their hands, and they as gladly yield me
To the uncircumcis'd a welcome prey,
Bound with two cords ; but cords to me were threads
Touch'd with the flame : on their whole host I flew
Unarm'd, and with a trivial weapon fell'd
Their choicest youth ; they only liv'd who fled.
Had Judah that day join'd, or one whole tribe,
They had by this possess'd the towers of Gath,
And lorded over them whom they now serve :
But what more oft in nations grown corrupt,
And by their vices brought to servitude,
Than to love bondage more than liberty,
Bondage with ease than strenuous liberty ;
And to despise, or envy, or suspect
Whom God hath of his special favour rais'd
As their deliverer ; if he ought begin,
How frequent to desert him, and at last
To heap ingratitude on worthiest deeds ?

Chor. Thy words to my remembrance bring
How Succoth and the fort of Penuel
Their great deliverer contemn'd,
The matchless Gideon in pursuit
Of Madian and her vanquish'd kings :
And how ingrateful Ephraim
Had dealt with Jephtha, who by argument,
Not worse than by his shield and spear,
Defended Israel from the Ammonite,
Had not his prowess quell'd their pride
In that sore battle, when so many died

Without reprieve adjudg'd to death,
For want of well pronouncing Shibboleth.

Sam. Of such examples add me to the roll,
Me easily indeed mine may neglect,
But God's propos'd deliverance not so,

Chor. Just are the ways of God,
And justifiable to men;
Unless there be who think not God at all;
If any be, they walk obscure;
For of such doctrine never was there school,
But the heart of the fool,
And no man therein doctor but himself.

Yet more there be who doubt his ways not just,
As to his own edicts found contradicting,
Then give the reins to wand'ring thought,
Regardless of his glory's diminution;
Till by their own perplexities involv'd
They ravel more, still less resolv'd,
But never find self-satisfying solution.

As if they would confine th' Interminable,
And tie him to his own prescript,
Who made our laws to bind us, not himself,
And hath full right to' exempt
Whom so it pleases him by choice
From national obstruction, without taint
Of sin, or legal debt;
For with his own laws he can best dispense.

He would not else who never wanted means,
Nor in respect of th' enemy just cause
To set his people free,
Have prompted this heroic Nazarite,
Against his vows of strictest purity,
To seek in marriage that fallacious bride,

Unclean, unchaste.

Down reason then, at least vain reasonings down,
Though reason here aver
That moral verdict quits her of unclean :
Unchaste was subsequent, her stain, not his.

But see here comes thy reverend sire
With careful step, locks white as down,
Old Manoah : advise
Forthwith how thou ought'st to receive him.

Sam. Ay me, another inward grief awak'd
With mention of that name renews th' assault.

Man. Brethren, and men of Dan, for such ye seem,
Though in this uncouth place ; if old respect,
As I suppose, tow'ards your once glory'd friend,
My son now captive, hither hath inform'd
Your younger feet, while mine cast back with age
Came lagging after ; say if he be here ?

Chor. As signal now in low dejected state,
As erst in high'est, behold him where he lies.

Man. O miserable change ! is this the man,
That invincible Samson, far renown'd,
The dread of Israel's foes, who with a strength
Equivalent to angels, walk'd their streets,
None offering fight ; who single combatant
Duel'd their armies rank'd in proud array,
Himself an army, now unequal match
To save himself against a coward arm'd
At one spear's length ? O ever-failing trust
In mortal strength ! and O what not in man
Deceivable and vain ? Nay, what thing good
Pray'd for, but often proves our woe, our bane ?
I pray'd for children, and thought barrenness
In wedlock a reproach ; I gain'd a son,

And such a son as all men hail'd me happy ;
Who would be now a father in my stead ?
O wherefore did God grant me my request,
And as a blessing with such pomp adorn'd ?
Why are his gifts desirable, to tempt
Our earnest pray'rs, then giv'n with solemn hand
As graces, draw a scorpion's tail behind ?
For this did th' angel twice descend ? for this
Ordain'd thy nurture holy, as of a plant
Select, and sacred, glorious for a while,
The miracle of men ; then in an hour
Insar'd, assaulted, overcome, led bound,
Thy foe's derision, captive, poor, and blind,
Into a dungeon thrust, to work with slaves ?
Alas, methinks whom God hath chosen once
To worthiest deeds, if he through frailty err,
He should not so o'erwhelm, and as a thrall
Subject him to so foul indignities,
Be' it but for honour's sake of former deeds.

Sam. Appoint not heav'nly disposition, father ;
Nothing of all these evils hath befall'n me
But justly ; I myself have brought them on,
Sole author I, sole cause : if aught seem vile,
As vile hath been my folly, who' have profan'd
The mystery of God giv'n me under pledge
Of vow, and have betray'd it to a woman,
A Canaanite, my faithless enemy .
This well I knew, nor was at all surpris'd,
But warn'd by oft experience : did not she
Of Timna first betray me, and reveal
The secret wrested from me in her height
Of nuptial love profess'd, carrying it straight
To them who had corrupted her, my spies

And rivals ? In this other was there found
More faith, who also in her prime of love,
Spousal embraces, vitiated with gold,
Though offer'd only, by the scent conceiv'd
Her spurious first-born, treason against me ?
Thrice she assay'd with flattering pray'rs and sighs,
And amorous reproaches, to win from me
My capital secret, in what part my strength
Lay stor'd, in what part summ'd, that she might know ;
Thrice I deluded her, and turn'd to sport
Her importunity, each time perceiving
How openly, and with what impudence
She purpos'd to betray me, and (which was worse
Than undissembled hate) with what contempt
She sought to make me traitor to myself ;
Yet the fourth time, when must'ring all her wiles,
With blandish'd parlies, feminine assaults,
Tongue-batteries, she surceas'd not day nor night
To storm me overwatch'd, and weary'd out,
At times when men seek most repose and rest :
I yielded, and unlock'd her all my heart,
Who with a grain of manhood well resolv'd,
Might easily have shook off all her snares ;
But foul effeminacy held me yok'd
Her bond-slave ; O indignity, O blot
To honour and religion ! servile mind
Rewarded well with servile punishment !
The base degree to which I now am fall'n.
These rags, this grinding is not yet so base
As was my former servitude ignoble,
Unmanly, ignominious, infamous,
True slavery, and that blindness worse than this,
That saw not how degenerately I serv'd.

Man. I cannot praise thy marriage choices, son,
Rather approv'd them not; but thou didst plead
Divine impulsion prompting how thou might'st
Find some occasion to infest our foes.
I state not that; this I am sure, our foes
Found soon occasion thereby to make thee
Their captive, and their triumph; thou the sooner
Temptation found'st, or over potent charms
To violate the sacred trust of silence
Deposited within thee; which to have kept
Tacit was in thy power: true; and thou bear'st
Enough, and more, the burden of that fault;
Bitterly hast thou paid, and still art paying
That rigid score. A worse thing yet remains,
This day the Philistines a popular feast
Here celebrate in Gaza; and proclaim
Great pomp, and sacrifice, and praises loud
To Dagon, as their god who hath deliver'd
Thee, Samson, bound and blind into their hands,
Them out of thine, who slew'st them many a slain.
So Dagon shall be magnify'd, and God,
Besides whom is no god, compar'd with idols
Disglorify'd, blasphem'd, and had in scorn
By the idolatrous rout amidst their wine;
Which to have come to pass by means of thee,
Samson, of all thy sufferings think the heaviest,
Of all reproach the most with shame that ever
Could have befall'n thee and thy father's house.

Sam. Father, I do acknowledge and confess
That I this honour, I this pomp have brought
To Dagon, and advanc'd his praises high
Among the Heathen round; to God have brought
Dishonour, obloquy, and op'd the mouths

Of idolists and atheists ; have brought scandal
To Israel, diffidence of God, and doubt
In feeble hearts propense enough before
To waver, or fall off and join with idols ;
Which is my chief affliction, shame and sorrow,
The anguish of my soul, that suffers not
Mine eye to harbour sleep, or thoughts to rest.
This only hope relieves me, that the strife
With me hath end ; all the contest is now
'Twixt God and Dagon ; Dagon hath presum'd,
Me overthrown, to enter lists with God,
His deity comparing and preferring
Before the God of Abraham. He, be sure,
Will not connive, or linger, thus provok'd,
But will arise and his great name assert :
Dagon must stoop, and shall ere long receive
Such a discomfit, as shall quite despoil him
Of all these boasted trophies won on me,
And with confusion blank his worshippers. [words

Man. With cause this hope relieves thee, and these
I as a prophecy receive ; for God,
Nothing more certain, will not long defer
To vindicate the glory of his name
Against all competition, nor will long
Endure it doubtful whether God be Lord,
Or Dagon. But for thee what shall be done ?
Thou must not in the mean while, here forgot,
Lie in this miserable loathsome plight
Neglected. I already have made way
To some Philistian lords, with whom to treat
About thy ransom : well they may by this
Have satisfy'd their utmost of revenge

By pains and slaveries, worse than death inflicted
On thee, who now no more canst do them harm.

Sam. Spare that proposal, father; spare the trouble
Of that solicitation : let me here,
As I deserve, pay on my punishment ;
And expiate, if possible, my crime,
Shameful garrulity. To have reveal'd
Secrets of men, the secrets of a friend,
How heinous had the fact been, how deserving
Contempt, and scorn of all, to be excluded
All friendship, and avoided as a blab,
The mark of fool set on his front ?
But I God's counsel have not kept, his holy secret
Presumptuously have publish'd impiously,
Weakly at least, and shamefully : a sin
That Gentiles in their parables condemn
To their abyss and horrid pains confin'd.

Man. Be penitent and for thy fault contrite,
But act not in thy own affliction, son :
Repent the sin, but if the punishment
Thou canst avoid, self-preservation bids ;
Or th' execution leave to high disposal,
And let another hand, not thine, exact
Thy penal forfeit from thyself ; perhaps
God will relent, and quit thee all his debt ;
Whoever more approves and more accepts ;
(Best pleas'd with humble' and filial submission)
Him who imploring mercy sues for life,
'Than who self-rigorous chooses death as due ;
Which argues over-just, and self-displeas'd
For self-offence, more than for God offended.
Reject not then what offer'd means ; who knows
But God hath set before us, to return thee

Home to thy country and his sacred house,
Where thou may'st bring thy offerings, to avert
His further ire, with pray'rs and vows renew'd?

Sam. His pardon I implore; but as for life,
To what end should I seek it? when in strength
All mortals I excell'd, and great in hopes
With youthful courage and magnanimous thoughts
Of birth from heav'n foretold and high exploits,
Full of divine instinct, after some proof
Of acts indeed heroic, far beyond
The sons of Anak, famous now and blaz'd,
Fearless of danger, like a petty god
I walk'd about admir'd of all and dreaded
On hostile ground, none daring my affront.
Then swoll'n with pride into the snare I fell
Of fair fallacious looks, venereal trains,
Softened with pleasure and voluptuous life;
At length to lay my head and hallow'd pledge
Of all my strength in the lascivious lap
Of a deceitful concubine, who shorn me
Like a tame wether, all my precious fleece,
Then turn'd me out ridiculous, despoil'd,
Shav'n, and disarm'd, among mine enemies.

Chor. Desire of wine and all delicious drinks,
Which many a famous warrior overturns,
Thou couldst repress, nor did the dancing ruby
Sparkling, out-pour'd, the flavour, or the smell,
Or taste that cheers the heart of gods and men,
Allure thee from the cool crystalline stream.

Sam. Wherever fountain or fresh current flow'd
Against the eastern ray, translucent, pure
With touch ethereal of Heav'n's fiery rod,
I drank, from the clear milky juice allaying

Thirst, and refresh'd; nor envy'd them the grape
Whose heads that turbulent liquor fills with fumes.

Chor. O madness, to think use of strongest wines
And strongest drinks our chief support of health,
When God with these forbidd'n made choice to rear
His mighty champion, strong above compare,
Whose drink was only from the liquid brook.

Sam. But what avail'd this temp'rance, not complete
Against another object more enticing?
What boots it at one gate to make defence,
And at another to let in the foe,
Effeminately vanquish'd? by which means,
Now blind, dishearten'd, sham'd, dishonour'd, quell'd,
To what can I be useful, wherein serve
My nation, and the work from Heav'n impos'd,
But to sit idle on the household hearth,
A burd'nous drone; to visitants a gaze,
Or pity'd object, these redundant locks
Robustious to no purpose clust'ring down,
Vain monument of strength; till length of years
And sedentary numness craze my limbs
To a contemptible old age obscure?
Here let me rather drudge and earn my bread,
Till vermine and the draff of servile food
Consume me, and oft-invoked death
Hasten the welcome end of all my pains.

Man. Wilt thou then serve the Philistines with that gift
Which was expressly given thee to annoy them?
Better at home lie bed-rid, not only idle,
Inglorious, unemploy'd, with age outworn.
But God who caus'd a fountain at thy prayer
From the dry ground to spring, thy thirst to' allay
After the brunt of battle, can as easy

Cause light again within thy eyes to spring,
Wherewith to serve him better than thou hast;
And I persuade me so; why else this strength
Miraculous yet remaining in those locks?
His might continues in thee not for nought,
Nor shall his wondrous gifts be frustrate thus.

Sam. All otherwise to me my thoughts portend,
That these dark orbs no more shall treat with light,
Nor th' other light of life continue long,
But yield to double darkness nigh at hand:
So much I feel my genial spirits droop,
My hopes all flat, Nature within me seems
In all her functions weary of herself,
My race of glory run, and race of shame,
And I shall shortly be with them that rest.

Man. Believe not these suggestions which proceed
From anguish of the mind and humours black,
That mingle with thy fancy. I however
Must not omit a father's timely care
To prosecute the means of thy deliverance
By ransom, or how else: mean while be calm,
And healing words from these thy friends admit.

Sam. O that torment should not be confin'd
To the body's wounds and sores,
With maladies innumerable
In heart, head, breast and reins;
But must secret passage find
To th' inmost mind,
There exercise all his fierce accidents,
And on her purest spirits prey,
As on entrails, joints, and limbs,
With answerable pains, but more intense,
Though void of corporal sense.

My griefs not only pain me
As a ling'ring disease,
But finding no redress, ferment and rage,
Nor less than wounds immedicable
Rankle, and fester, and gangrene,
To black mortification.
Thoughts my tormentors arm'd with deadly stings
Mangle my apprehensive tenderest parts,
Exasperate, exulcerate, and raise
Dire inflammation, which no cooling herb
Or medicinal liquor can assuage,
Nor breath of vernal air from snowy Alp.
Sleep hath forsook and giv'n me o'er
To death's benumbing opium as my only cure :
Thence faintings, swoonings of despair,
And sense of Heav'n's desertion.

I was his nursling once and choice delight,
His destin'd from the womb,
Promis'd by heav'nly message twice descending.
Under his special eye
Abstemious I grew up and thriv'd amain ;
He led me on to mightiest deeds,
Above the nerve of mortal arm,
Against th' uncircumcis'd, our enemies :
But now hath cast me off as never known,
And to those cruel enemies,
Whom I by his appointment had provok'd ;
Left me all helpless, with th' irreparable loss
Of sight, reserv'd alive to be repeated
The subject of their cruelty or scorn.
Nor am I in the list of them that hope ;
Hopeless are all my evils, all remediless :
This one prayer yet remains, might I beard.

No long petition, speedy death,
The close of all my miseries, and the balm.

Chor. Many are the sayings of the wise
In ancient and in modern books inroll'd,
Extolling patience as the truest fortitude;
And to the bearing well of all calamities,
All chances incident to man's frail life,
Consolatories writ
With study'd argument, and much persuasion sought,
Lenient of grief and anxious thought:
But with th' afflicted in his pangs their sound
Little prevails, or rather seems a tune
Harsh, and of dissonant mood from his complaint;
Unless he feel within
Some source of consolation from above,
Secret refreshings, that repair his strength,
And fainting spirits uphold.

God of our fathers, what is man!
That thou towards him with hand so various,
Or might I say contrarious,
Temper'st thy providence through his short course,
Not ev'nly, as thou rul'st
Th' angelic orders, and inferior creatures mute,
Irrational and brute.
Nor do I name of men the common rout,
That wand'ring loose about
Grow up and perish, as the summer fly,
Heads without name no more remember'd,
But such as thou hast solemnly elected,
With gifts and graces éminently adorn'd
To some great work, thy glory,
And people's safety, which in part they' effect:
Yet towards these thus dignify'd, thou oft

Amidst their height of noon
Changest thy count'nance, and thy hand with no regard
Of highest favours past
From thee on them, or them to thee of service.

Nor only dost degrade them, or remit
To life obscur'd, which were a fair dismissal,
But throws them lower than thou didst exalt them high,
Unseemly falls in human eye,
Too grievous for the trespass or omission;
Oft leav'st them to the hostile sword
Of heathen and profane, their carcasses
To dogs and fowls a prey, or else captiv'd;
Or to the unjust tribunals, under change of times,
And condemnation of th' ungrateful multitude.
If these they 'scape, perhaps in poverty,
With sickness and disease, thou bow'st them down,
Painful diseases, and deform'd,
In crude old age;
Though not disordinate, yet causeless suff'ring
The punishment of dissolute days: in fine,
Just or unjust alike seem miserable,
For oft alike both come to evil end.

So deal not with this once thy glorious champion,
The image of thy strength, and mighty minister.
What do I beg? how hast thou dealt already?
Behold him in this state calamitous, and turn
His labours, for thou canst, to peaceful end.

But who is this, what thing of sea or land?
Female of sex it seems,
That so bedeck'd, ornate, and gay,
Comes this way sailing
Like a stately ship
Of Tarsus, bound for th' isles

Of Javan or Gadire,
With all her bravery on, and tackle trim,
Sails fill'd, and streamers waving,
Court'd by all the winds that hold them play,
An amber scent of odorous perfume
Her harbinger, a damsel train behind;
Some rich Philistian matron she may seem,
And now at nearer view, no other certain
Than Dalila thy wife.

Sam. My wife, my traitress, let her not come near me!

Chor. Yet on she moves, now stands and eyes thee fix'd,
About t'have spoke, but now, with head declin'd
Like a fair flower surcharg'd with dew, she weeps,
And words address'd seem into tears dissolv'd,
Wetting the borders of her silken veil:
But now again she makes address to speak.

Dal. With doubtful feet and wavering resolution
I come, still dreading thy displeasure, Samson,
Which to have merited, without excuse,
I cannot but acknowledge: yet if tears
May expiate (though the fact more evil drew
In the perverse event than I foresaw)
My penance hath not slacken'd, though my pardon
No way assur'd. But conjugal affection
Prevailing over fear, and timorous doubt,
Hath led me on desirous to behold
Once more thy face, and know of thy estate,
If aught in my ability may serve
To lighten what thou suffer'st, and appease
Thy mind with what amends is in thy power;
Though late, yet in some part to recompense
My rash but more unfortunate misdeed.

Sam. Out, out, hyæna! these are thy wonted arts,

And arts of every woman false like thee,
To break all faith, all vows, deceive, betray,
Then as repentant to submit, beseech,
And reconciliation move with feign'd remorse,
Confess, and promise wonders in her change,
Not truly penitent, but chief to try
Her husband, how far urg'd his patience bears,
His virtue or weakness which way to assail:
Then with more cautious and instructed skill
Again transgresses, and again submits;
That wisest and best men full oft beguil'd
With goodness principled not to reject
The penitent, but ever to forgive,
Are drawn to wear out miserable days,
Intangled with a pois'nous bosom snake,
If not by quick destruction soon cut off
As I by thee, to ages an example.

Dal. Yet hear me, Samson; not that I endeavour
To lessen or extenuate my offence,
But that on the other side if it be weigh'd
By' itself, with aggravations not surcharg'd,
Or else with just allowance counterpois'd,
I may, if possible, thy pardon find
The easier tow'ards me, or thy hatred less.
First granting, as I do, it was a weakness
In me, but incident to all our sex,
Curiosity, inquisitive, importune
Of secrets, then with like infirmity
To publish them, both common female faults;
Was it not weakness also to make known
For importunity, that is for nought,
Wherein consisted all thy strength and safety?
'To what I did, thou showed'st me first the way.

But I to enemies reveal'd, and should not:
Nor should'st thou have trusted that to woman's frailty:
Ere I to thee, thou to thyself wast cruel.
Let weakness then with weakness come to parley,
So near related, or the same of kind,
Thine forgive mine; that men may censure thine
The gentler, if severely thou exact not
More strength from me than in thyself was found.
And what if love, which thou interpret'st hate,
The jealousy of love, powerful of sway
In human hearts, nor less in mine tow'ards thee,
Caus'd what I did? I saw thee mutable
Of fancy, fear'd lest one day thou would'st leave me
As her at Timna, sought by all means therefore
How to indear, and hold thee to me firmest:
No better way I saw than by' importuning
To learn thy secrets, get into my power
The key of strength and safety: thou wilt say,
Why then reveal'd? I was assur'd by those
Who tempted me, that nothing was design'd
Against thee but safe custody and hold:
That made for me; I knew that liberty
Would draw thee forth to perilous enterprizes,
While I at home sat full of cares and fears,
Wailing thy absence in my widow'd bed;
Here I should still enjoy thee day and night
Mine and Love's prisoner, not the Philistines,
Whole to myself, unhazarded abroad,
Fearless at home of partners in my love.
These reasons in love's law have pass'd for good,
Though fond and reasonless to some perhaps;
And love hath oft, well-meaning, wrought much woe,
Yet always pity' or pardon hath obtain'd.

Be not unlike all others, not austere
As thou art strong, inflexible as steel.
If thou in strength all mortals dost exceed,
In uncompassionate anger do not so.

Sam. How cunningly the sorceress displays
Her own transgressions, to upbraid me mine!
That malice not repentance brought thee hither,
By this appears: I gave, thou say'st, th' example,
I led the way; bitter reproach, but true;
I to myself was false ere thou to me;
Such pardon therefore as I give my folly,
Take to thy wicked deed; which when thou seest
Impartial, self-severe, inexorable,
Thou wilt renounce thy seeking, and much rather
Confess it feign'd: weakness is thy excuse,
And I believe it, weakness to resist
Philistian gold: if weakness may excuse,
What murderer, what traitor, parricide,
Incestuous, sacrilegious, but may plead it?
All wickedness is weakness: that plea therefore
With God or man will gain thee no remission.
But love constrain'd thee; call it furious rage
To satisfy thy lust: love seeks to' have love;
My love how could'st thou hope, who took'st the way
To raise in me inexpiable hate,
Knowing, as needs I must, by thee betray'd?
In vain shou striv'st to cover shame with shame,
Or by evasions thy crime uncover'st more.

Dal. Since thou determin'st weakness for no plea
In man or woman, though to thy own condemning,
Hear what assaults I had, what snares besides,
What sieges girt me round, ere I consented;
Which might have aw'd the best resolv'd of men,

The constantest, to' have yielded without blame.
It was not gold, as to my charge thou lay'st,
That wrought with me; thou know'st the magistrates
And princes of my country came in person,
Solicited, commanded, threaten'd, urg'd,
Adjur'd by all the bonds of civil duty
And of religion, press'd how just it was,
How honourable, how glorious to intrap
A common enemy, who had destroy'd
Such numbers of our nation: and the priest
Was not behind, but ever at my ear,
Preaching how meritorious with the gods
It would be to insnare an irreligious
Dishonourer of Dagon: what had I
To' oppose against such powerful arguments?
Only my love of thee held long debate,
And combated in silence all these reasons
With hard contest: at length that grounded maxim,
So rife and celebrated in the mouths
Of wisest men, that to the public good
Private respects must yield, with grave authority
Took full possession of me and prevail'd;
Virtue, as I thought, truth, duty, so enjoining.

Sam. I thought where all thy circling wiles would end;
In feign'd religion, smooth hypocrisy:
But had thy love, still odiously pretended,
Been, as it ought, sincere, it would have taught thee
Far other reasonings, brought forth other deeds.
I, before all the daughters of my tribe
And of my nation, chose thee from among
My enemies, lov'd thee, as too well thou knew'st,
Too well, unbosom'd all my secrets to thee,
Not out of levity, but over-power'd

By thy request, who could deny thee nothing ;
Yet now am judg'd an enemy. Why then
Didst thou at first receive me for thy husband,
Then, as since then, thy country's foe profess'd ?
Being once a wife, for me thou wast to leave
Parents and country ; nor was I their subject,
Nor under their protection but my own,
Thou mine, not theirs ; if aught against my life
Thy country sought of thee, it sought unjustly,
Against the law of nature, law of nations,
No more thy country, but an impious crew
Of men conspiring to uphold their state
By worse than hostile deeds, violating the ends
For which our country is a name so dear ;
Not therefore to be' obey'd. But zeal mov'd thee ;
To please thy gods thou didst it ; gods unable
To' acquit themselves and prosecute their foes
But by ungodly deeds ; the contradiction
Of their own deity, gods cannot be ;
Less therefore to be pleas'd, obey'd, or fear'd.
These false pretexs and varnish'd colours failing,
Bare in thy guilt how foul must thou appear ?

Dal. In argument with men, a woman ever
Goes by the worse, whatever be her cause.

Sam. For want of words no doubt, or lack of breath ;
Witness when I was worried with thy peals.

Dal. I was a fool, too rash, and, quite mistaken
In what I thought would have succeeded best.
Let me obtain forgiveness of thee, Samson,
Afford me place to show what recompence
'Tow'ards thee I intend for what I have misdone,
Misguided ; only what remains past cure
Bear not too sensibly, nor still insist

To' afflict thyself in vain : though sight be lost,
Life yet hath many solaces, enjoy'd
Where other senses want not their delights
At home in leisure and domestic ease,
Exempt from many a care and chance to which
Eye-sight exposes daily men abroad.
I to the lords will intercede, not doubting
Their favourable ear, that I may fetch thee
From forth this loathsome prison-house, to abide
With me, where my redoubled love and care
With nursing diligence, to me glad office,
May ever tend about thee to old age,
With all things grateful cheer'd, and so supply'd,
That what by me thou' hast lost thou least shalt miss.

Sam. No, no, of my condition take no care ;
It fits not ; thou and I long since are twain :
Nor think me so unwary or accurs'd,
To bring my feet again into the snare
Where once I have been caught ; I know thy trains
Though dearly to my cost, thy gins and toils ;
Thy fair enchanted cup, and warbling charms,
No more on me have power, their force is null'd,
So much of adder's wisdom I have learn'd
To fence my ear against thy sorceries,
If in my flower of youth and strength, when all men
Lov'd, honour'd, fear'd me, thou alone could'st hate me
Thy husband, slight me, sell me, and forego me ;
How wouldst thou use me now, blind, and thereby
Deceivable, in most things as a child
Helpless, thence easily contemn'd, and scorn'd,
And last neglected ? How wouldst thou insult,
When I must live uxorious to thy will
In perfect thralldom, how again betray me,

Bearing my words and doings to the lords
To gloss upon, and censuring, frown or smile?
This jail I count the house of liberty
To thine, whose doors my feet shall never enter.

Dal. Let me approach at least, and touch thy hand.

Sam. Not for thy life, least fierce remembrance wake
My sudden rage to tear thee joint by joint.
At distance I forgive thee, go with that;
Bewail thy falsehood, and the pious works
It hath brought forth to make thee memorable
Among illustrious women, faithful wives:
Cherish thy hasten'd widowhood with the gold
Of matrimonial treason: so farewell.

Dal. I see thou art implacable, more deaf
To prayers than winds and seas, yet winds to seas
Are reconcil'd at length, and sea to shore:
Thy anger, unappeasable, still rages,
Eternal tempests, never to be calm'd.
Why do I humble thus myself, and suing
For peace, reap nothing but repulse and hate?
Bid go with evil omen and the brand
Of infamy upon my name denounc'd?
To mix with thy concernments I desist
Henceforth, nor too much disapprove my own.
Fame if not double-fac'd is double-mouth'd,
And with contrary blast proclaims most deeds;
On both his wings, one black, the other white,
Bears greatest names in his wild aery flight.
My name perhaps among the circumcis'd
In Dan, in Judah, and the bordering tribes,
To all posterity may stand defam'd,
With malediction mention'd, and the blot
Of falsehood most unconjugal traduc'd.

But in my country, where I most desire,
In Ecron, Gaza, Asdod, and in Gath,
I shall be nam'd among the famousest
Of women, sung at solemn festivals,
Living and dead recorded, who to save
Her country from a fierce destroyer, chose
Above the faith of wedlock bands, my tomb
With odours visited and annual flowers;
Not less renown'd than in Mount Ephraim
Jael, who with inhospitable guile
Smote Sisera sleeping through the temples nail'd.
Nor shall I count it heinous to enjoy
The public marks of honour and reward
Conferr'd upon me for the piety
Which to my country I was judg'd to' have shown.
At this who ever envies or repines,
I leave him to his lot, and like my own.

Chor. She's gone, a manifest serpent by her sting
Discover'd in the end, till now conceal'd.

Sam. So let her go, God sent her to debase me,
And aggravate my folly, who committed
To such a viper his most sacred trust
Of secrecy, my safety, and my life.

Chor. Yet beauty, though injurious, hath strange power,
After offence returning, to regain
Love once possess'd, nor can be easily
Repuls'd, without much inward passion felt
And secret sting of amorous remorse.

Sam. Love-quarrels oft in pleasing concord end,
Not wedlock-treachery indang'ring life.

Chor. It is not virtue, wisdom, valour, wit,
Strength, comeliness of shape, or amplest merit
That woman's love can win or long inherit,

But what it is, hard is to say,
Harder to hit,

(Which way soever men refer it)
Much like thy riddle, Samson, in one day
Or sev'n, though one should musing sit.

If any of these or all, the Timnian bride
Had not so soon preferr'd
Thy paranymp, worthless to thee compar'd,
Successor in thy bed,
Nor both so loosely disally'd
Their nuptials, nor this last so treacherously
Had shorn the fatal harvest of thy head.
Is it for that such outward ornament
Was lavish'd on their sex, that inward gifts
Were left for haste unfinish'd, judgment scant,
Capacity not rais'd to apprehend
Or value what is best
In choice, but ofttest to affect the wrong?
Or was too much of self-love mix'd,
Of constancy no root infix'd,
That either they love nothing, or not long?

Whate'er it be, to wisest men and best
Seeming at first all heav'nly under virgin veil,
Soft, modest, meek, demure,
Once join'd, the contrary she proves, a thorn
Intestine, far within defensive arms
A cleaving mischief, in his way to virtue
Adverse and turbulent, or by her charms
Draws him awry inslav'd
With dotage, and his sense deprav'd
To folly and shameful deeds which ruin ends.
What pilot so expert but needs must wreck
Imbark'd with such a steers-mate at the helm?

Favour'd of Heav'n who finds
One virtuous rarely found,
That in domestic good combines :
Happy that house ! his way to peace is smooth :
But virtue which breaks through all opposition,
And all temptation can remove,
Most shines and most is acceptable above.

Therefore God's universal law
Gave to the man despotic power
Over his female in due awe,
Nor from that right to part an hour,
Smile she or lour :
So shall he least confusion draw
On his whole life not sway'd
By female usurpation, or dismay'd.
But had we best retire, I see a storm ?

Sam. Fair days have oft contracted wind and rain.

Chor. But this another kind of tempest brings.

Sam. Be less abstruse, my riddling days are past.

Chor. Look now for no enchanting voice, nor fear
The bait of honied words ; a rougher tongue
Draws hitherward, I know him by his stride,
The giant Harapha of Gath, his look
Haughty as is his pile high-built and proud.
Comes he in peace ? what wind hath blown him hither
I less conjecture than when first I saw
The sumptuous Dalila floating this way :
His habit carries peace, his brow defiance.

Sam. Or peace or not, alike to me he comes.

Chor. His fraud we soon shall know—he now arrives.

Har. I come not, Samson, to condole thy chance,
As these perhaps, yet wish it had not been,
Though for no friendly intent. I am of Gath,

Men call me Harapha, of stock renown'd
As Og or Anak and the Emmims old
That Kiriathaim held, thou know'st me now
If thou at all art known. Much I have heard
Of thy prodigious might and feats perform'd
Incredible to me, in this displeas'd,
That I was never present on the place
Of those encounters, where we might have try'd
Each other's force in camp or listed field;
And now am come to see of whom such noise
Hath walk'd about, and each limb to survey,
If thy appearance answer loud report.

Sam. The way to know were not to see but taste.

Har. Dost thou already single me? I thought
Gyves and the mill had tam'd thee. O that Fortune
Had brought me to the field, where thou art fam'd
To' have wrought such wonders with an ass's jaw!
I should have forc'd thee soon with other arms,
Or left thy carcass where the ass lay thrown:
So had the glory' of prowess been recover'd
To Palestine, won by a Philistine,
From the unforeskin'd race, of whom thou bear'st
The highest name for valiant acts; that honour
Certain to' have won by mortal duel from thee,
I lose, prevented by thy eyes put out.

Sam. Boast not of what thou would'st have done, but do
What then thou would'st, thou seest it in thy hand.

Har. To combat with a blind man I disdain,
And thou hast need much washing to be touch'd.

Sam. Such usage as your honourable lords
Afford me' assassinated and betray'd,
Who durst not with their whole united powers
In fight withstand me single and unarm'd,

Nor in the house with chamber ambushes
Close-banded durst attack me, no not sleeping
Till they had hir'd a woman with their gold
Breaking her marriage faith to circumvent me.
Therefore without feign'd shifts let be assign'd
Some narrow place inclos'd, where sight may give thee,
Or rather flight, no great advantage on me;
Then put on all thy gorgeous arms, thy helmet
And brigandine of brass, thy broad habergeon,
Vant-brass and greves, and gauntlet, add thy spear,
A weaver's beam, and sev'n-times-folded shield,
I only with an oaken staff will meet thee,
And raise such outcries on thy clatter'd iron,
Which long shalt not withhold me from thy head,
That in a little time while breath remains thee,
Thou oft shalt wish thyself at Gath to boast
Again in safety what thou would'st have done
To Samson, but shalt never see Gath more.

Har. Thou durst not thus disparage glorious arms,
Which greatest heroes have in battle worn,
Their ornament and safety, had not spells
And black enchantments, some magician's art,
Arm'd thee or charm'd thee strong, which thou from heav'n
Feign'dst at thy birth was giv'n thee in thy hair,
Where strength can least abide, though all thy hairs
Were bristles rang'd like those that ridge the back
Of chaf'd wild boars or ruffled porcupines.

Sam. I know no spells, use no forbidden arts;
My trust is in the living God who gave me
At my nativity this strength, diffus'd
No less through all my sinews, joints and bones,
Than thine, while I preserv'd these locks unshorn,
The pledge of my unviolated vow.

For proof hereof, if Dagon be thy god,
Go to his temple, invoke his aid
With solemnest devotion, spread before him
How highly it concerns his glory now
To frustrate and dissolve these magic spells,
Which I to be the power of Israel's God
Avow, and challenge Dagon to the test,
Offering to combat thee his champion bold,
With th' utmost of his godhead seconded:
Then thou shalt see, or rather to thy sorrow
Soon feel, whose God is strongest, thine or mine.

Har. Presume not on thy God, whate'er he be,
Thee he regards not, owns not, hath cut off
Quite from his people, and deliver'd up
Into thy enemies' hands, permitted them
To put out both thine eyes, and fetter'd send thee
Into the common prison, there to grind
Among the slaves and asses thy comrades,
As good for nothing else, no better service
With those thy boist'rous locks, no worthy match
For valour to assail, nor by the sword
Of noble warrior, so to stain his honour,
But by the barber's razor best subdued.

Sam. All these indignities, for such they are
From thine, these evils I deserve and more,
Acknowledge them from God inflicted on me
Justly, yet despair not of his final pardon
Whose ear is ever open, and his eye
Gracious to re-admit the suppliant:
In confidence whereof I once again
Defy thee to the trial of mortal fight,
By combat to decide whose god is God,
Thine or whom I with Israel's sons adore.

Har. Fair honour that thou dost thy God, in trusting
He will accept thee to defend his cause,
A murderer, a revolter, and a robber.

Sam. Tongue-doughty Giant, how dost thou prove me these?

Har. Is not thy nation subject to our lords?
Their magistrates confess'd it, when they took thee
As a league-breaker and deliver'd bound
Into our hands: for hadst thou not committed
Notorious murder on those thirty men
At Ascalon, who never did thee harm,
Then like a robber stripp'dst them of their robes?
The Philistines, when thou hadst broke the league,
Went up with armed powers thee only seeking,
To others did no violence, nor spoil.

Sam. Among the daughters of the Philistines
I chose a wife, which argued me no foe;
And in your city held my nuptial feast:
But your ill-meaning politician lords,
Under pretence of bridal friends and guests,
Appointed to await me thirty spies,
Who threat'ning cruel death constrain'd the bride
To wring from me and tell to them the secret,
That solv'd the riddle which I had propos'd.
When I perceiv'd all set on enmity,
As on my enemies, wherever chanc'd,
I us'd hostility and took their spoil
To pay my underminers in their coin:
My nation was subjected to your lords.
It was the force of conquest; force with force
Is well ejected when the conquer'd can.
But I a private person, whom my country
As a league-breaker gave up bound, presum'd
Single rebellion and did hostile acts.

I was no private, but a person rais'd
With strength sufficient and command from Heav'n
To free my country; if their servile minds
Me their deliverer sent would not receive,
But to their masters gave me up for nought,
Th' unworthier they; whence to this day they serve.
I was to do my part from Heav'n assign'd,
And had perform'd it, if my known offence
Had not disabled me, not all your force:
These shifts refuted, answer thy appellant
Though by his blindness maim'd for high attempts,
Who now defies thee thrice to single fight,
As a petty enterprize of small enforce.

Har. With thee a man condemn'd, a slave inroll'd,
Due by the law to capital punishment;
To fight with thee no man of arms will deign.

Sam. Cam'st thou for this, vain boaster, to survey me,
To descant on my strength, and give thy verdict?
Come nearer, part not hence so slight inform'd;
But take good heed my hand survey not thee.

Har. O Baalzebub! can my ears unus'd
Hear these dishonours, and not render death?

Sam. No man withholds thee, nothing from thy hand
Fear I incurable; bring up thy van,
My heels are fetter'd, but my fist is free.

Har. This insolence other kind of answer fits.

Sam. Go baffled coward, lest I run upon thee,
Though in these chains, bulk without spirit vast,
And with one buffet lay thy structure low,
Or swing thee in the air, then dash thee down
To th' hazard of thy brains and shatter'd sides.

Har. By Astorath, ere long thou shalt lament
These braveries in irons loaden on thee.

Chor. His Giantship is gone somewhat crest-fall'n,
Stalking with less unconscionable strides,
And lower looks, but in a sultry chafe.

Sam. I dread him not, nor all his giant brood,
Though fame divulge him father of five sons,
All of gigantic size, Goliath chief.

Chor. He will directly to the lords, I fear,
And with malicious counsel stir them up
Some way or other yet further to' afflict thee.

Sam. He must allege some cause, and offer'd fight
Will not dare mention, lest a question rise
Whether he durst accept th' offer or not,
And that he durst not plain enough appear'd.
Much more affliction than already felt
They cannot well impose, nor I sustain,
If they intend advantage of my labours,
The work of many hands, which earns my keeping
With no small profit daily to my owners.
But come what will, my deadliest foe will prove
My speediest friend, by death to rid me hence,
The worst that he can give, to me the best.
Yet so it may fall out, because their end
Is hate, not help to me, it may with mine
Draw their own ruin who attempt the deed.

Chor. Oh how comely it is, and how reviving
To the spirits of just men long oppress'd,
When God into the hands of their deliverer
Puts invincible might
To quell the mighty of the earth, th' oppressor,
The brute and boist'rous force of violent men
Hardy and industrious to support
Tyrannic power, but raging to pursue
The righteous and all such as honour truth;

He all their ammunition
And feats of war defeats
With plain heroic magnitude of mind
And celestial vigour arm'd;
Their armories and magazines contemns,
Renders them useless, while
With winged expedition
Swift as the lightning glance he executes
His errand on the wicked, who surpriz'd
Lose their defence, distracted and amaz'd.

But patience is more oft the exercise
Of saints, the trial of their fortitude,
Making them each his own deliverer,
And victor over all
That Tyranny or Fortune can inflict.
Either of these is in thy lot,
Samson, with might indued
Above the sons of men; but sight hereav'd
May chance to number thee with those
Whom patience finally must crown.

This idol's day hath been to thee no day of rest,
Labouring thy mind
More than the working day thy hands.
And yet perhaps more trouble is behind,
For I descry this way
Some other tending, in his hand
A sceptre or quaint staff he bears,
Comes on amain, speed in his look.
By his habit I discern him now
A public officer, and now at hand.
His message will be short and voluble.

Of. Hebrews, the pris'ner Samson here I seek.

Chor. His manacles remark him, there he sits.

Of. Samson, to thee our lords thus bid me say;
This day to Dagon is a solemn feast,
With sacrifices, triumph, pomp, and games;
Thy strength they know surpassing human rate,
And now some public proof thereof require
To honour this great feast, and great assembly;
Rise therefore with all speed and come along
Where I will see thee hearten'd and fresh clad
To' appear as fits before th' illustrious lords.

Sam. Thou know'st I am an Hebrew, therefore tell them
Our law forbids at their religious rites
My presence; for that cause I cannot come.

Of. This answer, be assur'd, will not content them.

Sam. Have they not sword-players, and every sort
Of gymnic artists, wrestlers, riders, runners,
Jugglers and dancers, antics, mummers, mimics,
But they must pick me out with shackles tir'd,
And over-labour'd at their public mill,
To make them sport with blind activity?
Do they not seek occasion of new quarrels
On my refusal to distress me more,
Or make a game of my calamities?
Return the way thou cam'st, I will not come.

Of. Regard thyself, this will offend them highly.

Sam. Myself? my conscience and internal peace.
Can they think me so broken, so debas'd
With corporal servitude, that my mind ever
Will condescend to such absurd commands;
Although their drudge, to be their fool or jester,
And in my midst of sorrow and heart-grief
To show them feats, and play before their god,
The worst of all indignities, yet on me
Join'd with extreme contempt? I will not come.

Of. My message was impos'd on me with speed,

Brooks no delay : is this thy resolution ?

Sam. So take it with what speed thy message needs.

Of. I'm sorry what this stoutness will produce.

Sam. Perhaps thou shalt have cause to sorrow indeed.

Chor. Consider, Samson, matters now are strain'd
Up to the heighth, whether to hold or break ;
He's gone, and who knows how he may report
Thy words by adding fuel to the flame ?
Expect another message more imperious ;
More lordly thund'ring than thou well wilt bear.

Sam. Shall I abuse this consecrated gift
Of strength, again returning with my hair
After my great transgression, so requite
Favour renew'd, and add a greater sin
By prostituting holy things to idols ;
A Nazarite in place abominable
Vaunting my strength in honour to their Dagon ?
Besides how vile, contemptible, ridiculous,
What act more execrably unclean, profane ?

Chor. Yet with this strength thou serv'st the Philistines,
Idolatrous, uncircumcis'd, unclean.

Sam. Not in their idol-worship, but by labour
Honest and lawful to deserve my food
Of those who have me in their civil power.

Chor. Where the heart joins not, outward acts defile not.

Sam. Where outward force constrains, the sentence holds.
But who constrains me to the temple of Dagon,
Not dragging ? the Philistian lords command.
Commands are no constraints. If I obey them,
I do it freely, vent'ring to displease
God for the fear of man, and man prefer,
Set God behind : which in his jealousy
Shall never, unrepented, find forgiveness.
Yet that he may dispense with me or thee

Present in temples at idolatrous rites
For some important cause, thou need'st not doubt.

Chor. How thou wilt here come off surmounts my reach.

Sam. Be of good courage, I begin to feel
Some rousing motions in me, which dispose
To something extraordinary my thoughts.
I with this messenger will go along,
Nothing to do, be sure, that may dishonour
Our law, or stain my vow of Nazarite.
If there be ought of presage in the mind,
This day will be remarkable in my life
By some great act, or of my days the last.

Chor. In time thou hast resolv'd, the man returns.

Of. Samson, this second message from our lords
To thee I am bid say. Art thou our slave,
Our captive, at the public mill our drudge,
And dar'st thou at our sending and command
Dispute thy coming? come without delay;
Or we shall find such engines to assail
And hamper thee, as thou shalt come of force,
Though thou wert firmlier fasten'd than a rock.

Sam. I could be well content to try their art
Which to no few of them would prove pernicious.
Yet knowing their advantages too many,
Because they shall not trail me through their streets
Like a wild beast, I am content to go.
Masters' commands come with a power resistless
To such as owe them absolute subjection;
And for a life who will not change his purpose?
(So mutable are all the ways of men)
Yet this be sure, in nothing to comply
Scandalous or forbidden in our law.

Of. I praise thy resolution: doff these links:

By this compliance thou wilt win the lords
To favour, and perhaps to set thee free.

Sam. Brethren, farewell! your company along
I will not wish, lest it perhaps offend them
To see me girt with friends; and how the sight
Of me as of a common enemy,
So dreaded once, may now exasperate them,
I know not: lords are lordliest in their wine;
And the well-feasted priest then soonest fir'd
With zeal, if aught religion seem concern'd;
No less the people on their holy-days
Impetuous, insolent, unquenchable:
Happen what may, of me expect to hear
Nothing dishonourable, impure, unworthy
Our God, our law, my nation, and myself,
The last of me or no I cannot warrant.

Chor. Go, and the Holy One
Of Israel be thy guide
To what may serve his glory best, and spread his name
Great among the Heathen round;
Send thee the angel of thy birth, to stand
Fast by thy side, who from thy father's field
Rode up in flames after his message told
Of thy conception, and be now a shield
Of fire; that Spirit that first rush'd on thee
In the camp of Dan
Be efficacious in thee now at need.
For never was from Heav'n imparted
Measure of strength so great to mortal seed,
As in thy wondrous actions hath been seen.
But wherefore comes old Manoah in such haste
With youthful steps? much livelier than ere while
He seems: supposing here to find his son,

Or of him bringing to us some glad news?

Man. Peace with you, bretheren; my inducement hither
Was not at present here to find my son,
By order of the lords new parted hence
To come and play before them at their feast.
I heard all as I came, the city rings,
And numbers thither flock; I had no will
Lest I should see him forc'd to things unseemly.
But that which mov'd my coming now was chiefly
To give ye part with we what hope I have
With good success to work his liberty.

Chor. That hope would much rejoice us to partake
With thee; say, reverend Sire, we thirst to hear.

Man. I have attempted one by one the lords
Either at home, or through the high street passing,
With supplication prone and father's tears,
To' accept of ransom for my son their pris'ner.
Some much averse I found and wondrous harsh,
Contemptuous, proud, set on revenge and spite;
That part most reverenc'd Dagon and his priest:
Others more moderate seeming, but their aim
Private reward, for which both God and state
They easily would set to sale: a third
More generous far and civil, who confess'd
They had enough reveng'd, having reduc'd
Their foe to misery beneath their fears:
The rest was magnanimity to remit,
If some convenient ransom were propos'd.
What noise or shout was that? it tore the sky.

Chor. Doubtless the people shouting to behold
Their once great dread, captive and blind before them,
Or at some proof of strength before them shown.

Man. His ransom, if my whole inheritance

May compass it, shall willingly be paid
And number'd down : much rather I shall choose
To live the poorest in my tribe, than richest,
And he in that calamitous prison left.
No, I am fix'd not to part hence without him.
For his redemption all my patrimony,
If need be, I am ready to forego
And quit : not wanting him I shall want nothing.

Chor. Fathers are wont to lay up for their sons,
Thou for thy son art bent to lay out all :
Sons wont to nurse their parents in old age,
Thou in old age car'st how to nurse thy son
Made older than thy age through eye-sight lost.

Man. It shall be my delight to tend his eyes,
And view him sitting in the house, ennobled
With all those high exploits by him achiev'd,
And on his shoulders waving down those locks
That of a nation arm'd the strength contain'd :
And I persuade me God hath not permitted
His strength again to grow up with his hair
Garrison'd round about him like a camp
Of faithful soldiery, were not his purpose
To use him further yet in some great service,
Not to sit idle with so great a gift
Useless, and thence ridiculous about him.
And since his strength with eye-sight was not lost,
God will restore him eye-sight to his strength.

Chor. Thy hopes are not ill-founded, nor seem vain
Of his delivery, and the joy thereon
Conceiv'd, agreeable to a father's love,
In both which we, as next, participate.

Man. I know your friendly minds and—O what noise!
Mercy of Heav'n, what hideous noise was that !

Horribly loud, unlike the former shout!

Chor. Noise call you it or universal groan,
As if the whole inhabitation perish'd!
Blood, death, and deathful deeds are in that noise,
Ruin, destruction at the utmost point.

Man. Of ruin indeed methought I heard the noise :
Oh it continues, they have slain my son!

Chor. Thy son is rather slaying them, that outcry
From slaughter of one foe could not ascend.

Man. Some dismal accident it needs must be,
What shall we do, stay here or run and see?

Chor. Best keep together here, lest running thither
We unawares run into danger's mouth :
This evil on the Philistines is fall'n ;
From whom could else a general cry be heard?
The sufferers then will scarce molest us here,
From other hands we need not much to fear.
What if his eye-sight (for to Israel's God
Nothing is hard) by miracle restor'd,
He now be dealing dole among his foes,
And over heaps of slaughter'd walk his way?

Man. That were a joy presumptuous to be thought!

Chor. Yet God hath wrought things as incredible
For his people of old ; what hinders now ?

Man. He can I know, but doubt to think he will.
Yet hope would fain subscribe, and tempts belief.
A little stay will bring some notice hither.

Chor. Of good or bad so great, of bad the sooner ;
For evil news rides post, while good news baits :
And to our wish I see one hither speeding,
An Hebrew as I guess, and of our tribe.

Mes. O whither shall I run, or which way fly
The sight of this so horrid spectacle,

Which erst my eyes beheld and yet behold?
For dire imagination still pursues me.
But providence or instinct of nature seems,
Or reason, though disturb'd, and scarce consulted,
'To' have guided me aright, I know not how,
To thee first reverend Manoah, and to these
My countrymen, whom here I knew remaining,
As at some distance from the place of horror,
So in the sad event too much concern'd.

Man. The accident was loud, and here before thee
With rueful cry, yet what it was we hear not;
No preface needs, thou seest we long to know.

Mes. It would burst forth—but I recover breath
And sense distract, to know well what I utter.

Man. Tell us the sum, the circumstance defer.

Mes. Gaza yet stands, but all her sons are fall'n,
All in a moment overwhelm'd and fall'n.

Man. Sad, but thou know'st to Israelites not saddest
The desolation of a hostile city.

Mes. Feed on that first, there may in grief be surfeit

Man. Relate by whom?

Mes. By Samson.

Man. That still lessens
The sorrow, and converts it nigh to joy.

Mes. Ah Manoah! I refrain too suddenly
To utter what will come at last too soon;
Lest evil tidings with too rude irruption
Hitting thy aged ear should pierce too deep.

Man. Suspence in news is torture, speak them out.

Mes. Take then the worst in brief, Samson is dead.

Man. The worst indeed. O all my hopes defeated
To free him hence! but death who sets all free
Hath paid his ransom now and full discharge.

What windy joy this day had I conceiv'd
Hopeful of his delivery, which now proves
Abortive as the first-born bloom of Spring
Nipt with the lagging rear of Winter's frost!
Yet ere I give the reins to grief, say first
How died he; death to life is crown or shame:
All by him fell thou say'st, by whom fell he,
What glorious hand gave Samson his death's wound?

Mes. Unwounded of his enemies he fell.

Man. Wearied with slaughter then or how? explain.

Mes. By his own hands.

Man. Self-violence? what cause
Brought him so soon at variance with himself
Among his foes?

Mes. Inevitable cause
At once both to destroy and be destroy'd;
The edifice, where all were met to see him,
Upon their heads and on his own he pull'd.

Man. O lastly over-strong against thyself!
A dreadful way thou took'st to thy revenge.
More than enough we know; but while things yet
Are in confusion, give us, if thou canst,
Eye-witness of what first or last was done,
Relation more particular and distinct.

Mes. Occasions drew me early to this city,
And as the gates I enter'd with sun-rise,
The morning trumpets festival proclaim'd
Through each high-street: little I had dispatch'd,
When all abroad was rumour'd that this day
Samson should be brought forth to show the people
Proof of his mighty strength in feats and games;
I sorrow'd at his captive state, but minded
Not to be absent at that spectacle.

The building was a spacious theatre
Half-round on two main pillars vaulted high,
With seats where all the lords and each degree
Of sort might sit in order to behold ;
The other side was open, where the throng
On banks and scaffolds under sky might stand ;
I among these aloof obscurely stood.
The feast and noon grew high, and sacrifice
Had fill'd their hearts with mirth, high cheer, and wine,
When to their sports they turn'd. Immediately
Was Samson as a public servant brought,
In their state livery clad ; before him pipes
And timbrels, on each side went arm'd guards,
Both horse and foot, before him and behind
Archers, and slingers, cataphracts, and spears.
At sight of him the people with a shout
Rifted the air, clamoring their god with praise,
Who' had made their dreadful enemy their thrall.
He patient but undaunted, where they led him,
Came to the place, and what was set before him,
Which without help of eye might be assay'd
To heave, pull, draw, or break, he still perform'd,
All with incredible, stupendous force,
None daring to appear antagonist.
At length for intermission sake they led him
Between the pillars ; he his guide requested
(For so from such as nearer stood we heard)
As over-tir'd to let him lean a while
With both his arms on those two massy pillars,
'That to the arched roof gave main support.
He unsuspecting led him ; which when Samson
Felt in his arms, with head awhile inclin'd,
And eyes fast fix'd he stood, as one who pray'd,

Or some greater matter in his mind revolv'd :
At last with head erect thus cry'd aloud,
Hitherto, lords, what your commands impos'd
I have perform'd, as reason was obeying,
Not without wonder or delight beheld :
Now of my own accord such other trial
I mean to shew you of my strength, yet greater ;
As with amaze shall strike all who behold.
This utter'd, straining all his nerves he bow'd,
As with the force of winds and waters pent
When mountains tremble, those two massy pillars
With horrible convulsion to and fro
He tugg'd, he shook, till down they came and drew
The whole roof after them, with burst of thunder,
Upon the heads of all who sat beneath,
Lords, ladies, captains, counsellors, or priests,
Their choice nobility and flower, not only
Of this but each Philistian city round,
Met from all parts to solemnize this feast.
Samson with these immix'd, inevitably
Pull'd down the same destruction on himself ;
The vulgar only 'scap'd who stood without.

Chor. O dearly-bought revenge, yet glorious !
Living or dying thou hast fulfill'd
The work for which thou wast foretold
To Israel, and now ly'st victorious
Among thy slain self-kill'd
Not willingly, but tangled in the fold
Of dire necessity, whose law in death conjoin'd
Thee with thy slaughter'd foes in number more
Than all thy life hath slain before.

1. *Semichor.* While their hearts were jocund and sublime,
Drunk with idolatry, drunk with wine,

And fat regorg'd of bulls and goats,
Chaunting their idol, and preferring
Before our living dread who dwells
In Silo his bright sanctuary:
Among them he a spirit of phrenzy sent,
Who hurt their minds,
And urg'd them on with mad desire
To call in haste for their destroyer;
They only set on sport and play
Unweetingly importun'd
Their own destruction to come speedy upon them.
So fond are mortal men
Fall'n into wrath divine,
As their own ruin on themselves to' invite,
Insensate left, or to sense reprobate,
And with blindness internal struck.

2. *Semichor*. But he though blind of sight,
Despis'd and thought extinguish'd quite,
With inward eyes illuminated,
His fiery virtue rous'd
From under ashes into sudden flame,
And as an evening dragon came,
Assailant on the perched roosts,
And nests in order rang'd
Of tame villatic fowl; but as an eagle
His cloudless thunder bolted on their heads,
So Virtue giv'n for lost,
Depress'd, and overthrown, as seem'd,
Like that self-begotten bird
In the Arabian woods imbost,
That no second knows nor third,
And lay ere while a holocaust,
From out her ashy womb now teem'd,

Revives, reflowerishes, then vigorous most
When most unactive deem'd,
And though her body die, her fame survives
A secular bird ages of lives.

Man. Come, come, no time for lamentation now,
Nor much more cause; Samson hath quit himself
Like Samson, and heroically hath finish'd
A life heroic, on his enemies
Fully reveng'd hath left them years of mourning,
And lamentation to the sons of Caphtor
Through all Philistian bounds, to Israel
Honour hath left, and freedom, let but them
Find courage to lay hold on this occasion;
To' himself and father's house eternal fame,
And which is best and happiest yet, all this
With God not parted with, as was fear'd,
But favouring and assisting to the end.
Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail
Or knock the breast, no weakness, no contempt,
Dispraise, or blame, nothing but well and fair
And what may quiet us in a death so noble.
Let us go find the body where it lies
Sok'd in his enemies' blood, and from the stream
With lavers pure and cleansing herbs wash off
The clotted gore. I with what speed the while
(Gaza is not in plight to say us nay)
Will send for all my kindred, all my friends,
To fetch him hence, and solemnly attend
With silent obsequy and funeral train
Home to his father's house: there will I build him
A monument, and plant it round with shade
Of laurel ever green, and branching palm,
With all his trophies hung, and acts inroll'd

In copious legend, or sweet lyric song.
Thither shall all the valiant youth resort,
And from his memory inflame their breasts
To matchless valour, and adventures high;
The virgins also shall on feastful days
Visit his tomb with flow'rs, only bewailing
His lot unfortunate in nuptial choice,
From whence captivity and loss of eyes.

Chor. All is best, though we oft doubt
What th' unsearchable dispose
Of highest Wisdom brings about,
And ever best found in the close.
Oft he seems to hide his face,
But unexpectedly returns,
And to his faithful champion hath in place
Bore witness gloriously; whence Gaza mourns
And all that band them to resist
His uncontrollable intent;
His servants he with new acquist
Of true experience from this great event,
With peace and consolation hath dismiss'd,
And calm of mind all passion spent.

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